

Gain Freedom

The Role of Diet and Management in Treatment of Gastric Ulcers and 'Tying Up'

It is widely acknowledged that racehorses can be sensitive creatures with minor injuries and ailments preventing some horses from achieving their full potential on the racetrack. 'Tying Up' and gastric ulcers are examples of two problems that can hinder a horse's training regimen making it difficult for a trainer to get the results they desire with such horses.

Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome (EGUS) has been highlighted in recent years due to the high incidence of this disease amongst performance horses. EGUS refers to the occurrence of lesions mainly in the upper regions of the horse's stomach. Murray et al. (2005) has reported that exercise management, stall confinement, high concentrate diets and transportation can all influence the incidence of EGUS. Furthermore, high-cereal starch diets produce volatile fatty acids within the stomach that can contribute to the development of ulcers.

Studies have shown that between 80-90% of horses in training have gastric ulcers (Johnson 1994). The prevalence of gastric ulcers was only recognised with the introduction of gastric endoscopy and prior to this went undiagnosed. Signs of the disease include decreased appetite, weight loss, sourness in attitude and diarrhoea. By feeding a high fibre, low starch feed, more saliva is produced by the horse helping to buffer stomach acid. Gain Horse Feeds have incorporated the results of these scientific studies when formulating Gain Freedom, this product contains chopped alfalfa in conjunction with 'super fibres' to provide the horse with a natural and sustainable energy source. Good management practices such as dividing the concentrate into a greater number of meals 'recreates' grazing behaviour and can benefit a horse with EGUS.

Equine Exertional Rhabdomyolysis also known as 'Tying-Up' is commonly used to describe muscle cramping and cellular damage experienced by some horses after exercise. The symptoms of 'Tying – Up' can vary from stiffness after exercise to severe cramping of muscles, profuse sweating and increased heart and respiratory rates in more serious cases.

Various factors are reported to influence 'Tying – Up'; genetic factors, imbalances in electrolyte levels, inadequate antioxidant levels, management practices and in more recent years researchers have looked at the effects of high-starch/carbohydrate diets on the incidence of 'Tying-Up'. Studies carried out by McKenzie et al. (2003) concluded that replacing starch with a specifically designed fat ration allows horses to continue a high-calorie intake with a decreased chance of muscle damage. Gain Freedom is a palatable blend of the highest quality ingredients to produce a high oil, low starch performance coarse feed. It contains 'bioplex' trace minerals which guarantee maximum availability, natural antioxidants in the form of Vitamin E and Selplex, to minimize the risk of muscle damage post exercise and 'YeaSacc' to optimise gut health. Gain Freedom has met with the approval of many horsemen, Jim Bolger, Master of Coolcullen has tried the product and given it the seal of approval 'Gain Horse Feeds have responded to a requirement that I and many other successful trainers have for a high energy/high fibre performance feed. Freedom allows horses with specific nutritional needs to perform to their true potential'

